

being forced to supply the workmen with timber from their estates. About the same time Earl Percy resigned the Lord Marshal's staff, which he had obtained as the price of treachery to the popular cause. His affairs in the North gave him convenient reason or excuse for withdrawing temporarily from the centre of politics. He retired to hibernate like the snake, and did not again appear until he had once more changed his coat to suit the season.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulties that beset the new government were of an unusually pressing and formidable nature. It seemed not unlikely that the fire and sword which we had so long carried through France were coming back across the Channel to familiarise the cities and hamlets of England with the horrors of invasion. The combined French and Spanish fleets were cruising in the Channel unopposed. Bye, Dartmouth, Plymouth and other towns were taken and sacked. The Isle of Wight was occupied, and an army landed in Sussex which made itself master of several places and castles in the neighbourhood. The force was so large that it was expected they would march into the heart of the country; but fortunately they preferred to remain within touch of their fleet. Their operations were of the nature of an occupation rather than of a raid, for they only retired before the winter storms, not because any force was sent against them. The capture of the Isle of Wight, the destruction of so many important and flourishing towns, and the long stay of a French force on the mainland of Sussex, were not events that could be lightly passed over. Such a disgrace had not been known for more than a generation. It was a decided failure on the part of the new government, and unless it could be retrieved, there was no doubt that those around the King would again be forced to call in John of Gaunt to their aid. During all these national calamities, instead of heading our fleet and our armies, he was ostentatiously employing himself in hunting and country sports at Kenilworth. Men shook their heads over the story of a French prisoner who declared that if the English had made John their King, the late invasion of our shores could not have taken place. His policy of sulking was

<sup>1</sup> Wals., i. S39-40 ; *Cfuron. A.ng.* 16a~£ ; & *asdn* iv, 10, tñce Oouwoil.